

# **Annual European Montreal Meeting 2018**

## **UK Montreal owners host the 32nd International Montreal Meeting**

International meetings for Montreal enthusiasts, organised through the Montreal Register Europa, have been held in various European countries every year since 1987. The host country is generally announced at a meeting two years in advance, after having established a local organising team. The last meeting in the UK was held in South Wales in 2004, organised by Chris Slade.

Following the 2015 meeting in Cortina a team of three UK Montreal owners and partners agreed to host the 2018 meeting in the UK. Preparation began early in 2016 with a review of various parts of mainland UK. Potentially suitable regions were explored against the criteria of interesting driving routes on relatively quiet roads, a scenic environment with places of interest to visit and the ability to offer a local cultural experience. The meeting format is very much that of a social gathering, based on a three night stay in a 4 star hotel of suitable size, with parking to accommodate the expected number of participants. It was therefore necessary to bear this in mind when reviewing the suitability of an area as a base for the 32<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

Having considered a number of regions it became clear that the west coast of Scotland was favoured by the team, with Inveraray in Argyll a potential hub. This is the traditional county town of Argyll, overlooking Loch Fyne on the north western shore at the junction of the A819 (Glen Aray) and A83. It is also well located as a gateway to the Highlands & Islands, providing an excellent base for touring.

A two day reconnaissance visit was planned for May 2016, based in the Loch Fyne Hotel Inveraray with the objective of reviewing its suitability as a base for the meeting. Potential routes, stopping places and other attractions were explored which resulted in a firm proposal to hold the 32<sup>nd</sup> International Montreal Meeting at this location from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2018. This was presented to participants of the 2017 Montreal meeting in Rotterdam with meals, accommodation and participation in all activities included in the registration fee.

The meeting was advertised in the AROC (UK) Club magazine together with other appropriate motoring publications, and a detailed schedule for the meeting with registration forms was made available from a dedicated website and Bruce Taylor's Alfa Romeo Montreal Website.

### **2018 Montreal Meeting**

The Loch Fyne Hotel is beautifully located at the south end of Inveraray, with uninterrupted views over Loch Fyne and beyond to the Cowal Hills. As hosts and organisers of the meeting our team of six arrived a day in advance to ensure that everything was set up for the registration process, marker arrows set up at key junctions on the planned routes and specially printed menus distributed to the restaurants. Some participants from Europe, having covered a considerable distance over two or three days, also arrived a day early, ready for registration which took place from mid-day on the Thursday.

During registration participants were presented with a 'goody' bag containing the events programme in English, French or German, access tickets for visits, a specially printed event polo shirt, whisky glasses and a miniature of whisky amongst other Scottish and Montreal related items. The itinerary, key information relating to the area, petrol stations, breakdown recovery etc, were presented during the welcome reception, followed by a briefing of the next day's route and timings.

The scenic drives were planned over two days to be a relaxed and enjoyable experience of less than 120 miles per day. We were very fortunate that the weather remained fine throughout the three days of the meeting with rain only experienced overnight. Day one started with a short drive

to Inveraray Castle, the neo-Gothic family home of the Dukes of Argyll, for a group photo shoot with the castle as a backdrop. It is set in gardens and extensive grounds which were also the venue for the 8<sup>th</sup> Best of the West Festival (BOTWest) during the week-end of our visit. On leaving the castle the first part of the day's scenic drive took in part of Loch Awe and Loch Etive before our distinctive and colourful convoy proceeded north along Loch Linnhe to Ballachulish for lunch at the Isles of Glencoe Hotel. Situated on the shore of Loch Leven, the hotel offers dramatic views of the mountains of Glencoe. Following the spectacle of Glencoe, for those that had pre-registered, the afternoon's drive took in a visit to the Cruachan 'hollow mountain' power station built within a massive cavern 1km underground in Ben Cruachan on the shores of Loch Awe. Others took in the splendour of the views on the drive back to Inveraray plus the opportunity to return and visit the castle.

Friday night's dinner and the briefing for Saturday's drive were preceded by a tutored whisky tasting in the hotel, this included Islay and Highland single malts together with local Loch Fyne whisky, also a single malt, and a clear favourite with our colleagues!

The scenic drive on day two started in the direction of part of Loch Awe and Loch Etive, as on the previous day, before proceeding south through Oban along undulating coastal roads of Loch Feochan and Loch Melfort to the National Trust's Arduaine Gardens. Whilst relatively spacious, these gardens have the intimacy of a private garden with impressive coastal views and contain plants from many countries across the globe including East Asia and South America. On reflection more time could have been allowed to take in the splendour of Arduaine Gardens before proceeding south towards the Sound of Jura and Lochgilphead. Here our route followed the northern edge of Loch Fyne, through Inveraray and on to the Loch Fyne Restaurant for lunch. Renowned for its seafood and hand-dived oysters, an excellent buffet lunch was enjoyed before spending the remainder of the afternoon at the BOTWest Festival to enjoy live Scottish music with celebrity chefs as well as both whisky and local beer tasting.

During wine and canapés on the final evening, the head of the Montreal Register Europa thanked the hosts before a brief presentation of the next proposed meeting. At this point it has been traditional for a trophy to be handed over from the concluding organiser to the next. At previous meetings a model produced by Automobile Club Rovigo d'Italia has been used, this was presented by Sestilio Marcheselli, who organised a number of very successful meetings in Italy. This year a newly designed trophy based on the infamous Montreal LHD steering box was presented by Rob Jones. After a raffle with, you guessed, Loch Fyne whisky as the main prize we were piped through to the Gala Dinner by a Scottish piper in full regalia, followed by music from a local band and dancing to finish a very enjoyable and successful 32nd International Montreal Meeting.

The 32nd meeting was attended by 88 people with 36 Montreals and 6 other Alfa Romeo cars including two 105 Spiders, a Giulia GT, Giulia Super and an SZ. Participants came from as far afield as Sweden, with Finland the furthest driven in a Montreal, and included 20 from Germany, 13 from Switzerland, 8 from France and 6 from Luxembourg, as well as 2 each from Finland, Denmark, Austria and Sweden, in addition the 29 UK representatives. It is planned to hold the 2019 meeting in Luxembourg.

The meeting passed without any of the cars having major mechanical issues, the only vehicle recovery being for a puncture on the hire car of our Swedish participant, where no spare or means of repair was supplied.

Many old friendships and acquaintances were renewed during the meeting and new ones formed. It was also pleasing to see a number of younger and not so familiar faces attending, particularly from the UK. Let's hope that this trend continues and we see even more new owners participating in the 2019 meeting in Luxembourg.